

BELLEVUE NETWORK ON AGING
REGULAR MEETING
MINUTES

November 5, 2009
8:30 a.m.

Bellevue City Hall
Room 1E -120

MEMBERS PRESENT: Berta Seltzer, Dwayne Dilley, Diana Thompson, Howard Katz, Eileen Rasnick, Jullie Gray, Heidi Ressler, Hannah Kimball

MEMBERS ABSENT: Lynne Robinson, Bill Merriman, Bob Megargel

STAFF PRESENT: Cathy VonWald, Department of Parks and Community Services; Arthur Sullivan, ARCH; Janet Lewine, Department of Planning and Community Development

OTHERS PRESENT: Susan Daly; Polly Nelson, Hopelink

RECORDING SECRETARY: Gerry Lindsay

WELCOME AND ROLL CALL

The meeting was called to order at 8:38 a.m. by Ms. VonWald who presided. All committee members were present with the exception of Chair Robinson, Bill Merriman and Bob Megargel.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

A. October 8, 2009

Motion to approve the agenda was made by Ms. Thompson. Second was by Ms. Rasnick and the motion carried unanimously.

PRESENTATION

A. Aging In Place – Housing

Planner Janet Lewine with the Department of Planning and Community Development commented that twelve years ago when she moved into the neighborhood she lives in the kids in the neighborhood completely filled the elementary school bus. She said this year there were no trick or treaters on Halloween. The kids have not gone anywhere; they have just grown up and are driving their own cars now. If the neighborhood remains as stable as it has been for many years, in a few more years it will probably be a neighborhood peopled with retirees. Across the nation, the residential enclaves created to be great places to raise kids will prove to be challenging to grow old in; the built-in privacy will become an isolating factor. Some planners are beginning to think about how to retrofit neighborhoods into what they are calling life-long communities.

In 2007 the Washington State Housing Finance Commission conducted a survey of Washington residents between the ages of 50 and 77. The survey found that 77 percent of the respondents intend to remain in their homes after retirement. That finding would seem to strengthen the argument for making neighborhoods that were good to raise kids in good to retire in.

Ms. Lewine the 2009 Quiet Crisis report, available online at agingkingcounty.org, talks about a coming demographic tidal wave. By 2025, the senior population of King County is projected to double, reaching 23 percent of the total population. Of even more concern is the projection that the numbers of seniors in poverty will more than double during the same timeframe. Many seniors will find their life expectancy exceeding their savings. The medical system in place does not provide protections against bankruptcy, and of course the older generation is more likely to need healthcare services. Finances and health issues, therefore, will become housing issues as seniors find it difficult to remain in their homes.

The roundtable discussions at the workshop were very interesting. People were talking about their own neighborhoods and they voiced concerns about access to services, both getting to them and having the services come to them as they age.

Mr. Katz asked if the report takes into account the impact the economic downturn has had on older adults. Ms. Lewine said the report does not directly address that issue. ARCH director Arthur Sullivan said the numbers in the report are daunting without accounting for the financial impact the economic downturn has had on seniors. The downturn has just exacerbated the dilemma.

Ms. Thompson said she moved to her neighborhood in 1968 and there were lots of kids there. In time the kids grew up, the neighborhood aged, and the trick or treaters disappeared. Then a few years ago the neighborhood began to see an influx of young families, and the trick or treaters are back. When seniors say they want to age in their home, which may not necessarily mean the same thing for every person; many may not mean the specific home they have lived in for years.

Ms. Lewine said staff received direction from the Council at the end of 2007 for a two-phased housing work program. In the first phase the focus was on the Bel-Red subarea planning which included a vision for thousands of new businesses and jobs as well as 5000 new housing units. The work program included the development of affordable housing incentives for the new development in the corridor. The targets adopted in the subarea plan called for half of the housing units to be affordable to households making less than the area median income: 10 to 20 percent at under 50 percent of median income, 10 to 20 percent between 50 and 80 percent of median income, and 50 percent between 80 and 100 percent of median income.

The Bel-Red subarea plan was adopted in February 2009, and the Land Use Code addressing Bel-Red was adopted in May 2009. The list of tools adopted include the FAR amenity system under which the additional density permitted under the rezone cannot be accessed until affordable housing is provided; most new development will want the higher densities, and to get there they will be required to provide a percentage of the new units as affordable. Another tool is the ability of the city to exempt property taxes for 12 years for developments that provide a certain percentage of affordable housing units. The voluntary tools that exist citywide are being reviewed to see how they can be tweaked to be more usable and effective; in their current form, the tools have not been effective.

Ms. Lewine said a great deal was heard at the Quiet Crisis forum about the city's accessory dwelling unit ordinance. The ordinance has been on the books for some time and given the level of housing demand in the city it is surprising that so few accessory dwelling units have been created. The city issues permits for only about six accessory dwelling units per year, which is very low compared to other Eastside jurisdictions. The ordinance is fairly restrictive in that it disallows accessory dwelling units that are detached from the primary structure. Accessory dwelling units must have their own kitchens, bathrooms, bedroom and living area,

and there must be fire separation from the main unit. Guest cottages separate from the primary structure are allowed, but they cannot be rented out as accessory dwelling units. Accessory dwelling units are a great affordable housing choice; they help the homeowners by providing financial income or assistance with upkeep and chores, and they are affordable to those who rent them.

Ms. Ressler asked if accessory dwelling units can be allowed in neighborhoods that have homeowner CCRs prohibiting them. Mr. Sullivan said CCRs cannot override city regulations. That does not mean the neighborhood association is barred from filing a civil lawsuit against the property owner, but the city will permit the accessory dwelling unit in accord with the land use regulations.

Ms. Lewine said in addition to affordability tools and accessory dwelling units, the second phase of the work program will look at innovative housing options. The neighborhood character work that has been undertaken over the last year or so includes regulations that address new development that is out of character or size with existing development in single family neighborhoods, and construction practices that are disruptive to those living in single family neighborhoods. Waiting to be tackled are tree preservation and view issues. Hopefully everyone will come to agreement that neighborhoods can be adapted to make them more accessible and livable for stakeholder residents while allowing for new housing options.

Mr. Sullivan said Eastside cities fund affordable housing through a process overseen by ARCH. During the course of the past two years, a project was funded in the Issaquah Highlands that will serve families with a wide range of incomes, and another project in Factoria that will be for smaller families and homeless households.

The ARCH partnership now includes all of the cities in east King County. All of the cities are currently involved in updating their housing elements; the updates are due to be completed by 2011. One component of a housing plan is a needs assessment that looks at a variety of issues related to housing needs. ARCH is working with all of the Eastside cities to produce a single housing needs assessment with specific data for every city but having a focus on the Eastside as a whole. The hope is to have the document completed by mid-2010 in time to inform all elements of the comprehensive plans of the various cities as they are updated as required by state law. The document will look at historic housing trends and will project needs into the future.

Mr. Sullivan said during the housing workshops during the summer of 2009 there were many who brought up the issue of accessory dwelling units and ways for seniors to remain in their homes as they age. Most people want to age in place, but that sentiment can mean different things to different people. For some it means staying in the homes they have lived in for years; for others it means staying in their immediate neighborhoods over time, and for still others it means staying in their home city.

Ms. Ressler said she participated recently in a survey that asked how far one would go to support a farmers market. She said she indicated she would not go farther than four miles from her home because that is as far she can walk and carry something home. She said her idea of aging in place is to have all of the services she needs within walking distance of home.

Ms. Gray said she has a list of older clients and they all have a different idea of what aging in place means to them. Some of them are adamant about staying in their current homes, but are concerned that they will not be able to afford to do that, especially if caregiver support will be needed at some point. Other clients are willing to move provided they can stay in an area in which they are comfortable; they do not want to drive very far to access services, but they want to stay within their familiar community.

Ms. Kimball said she has been retired for nine years and is starting to contemplate long-term living arrangements. She said her definition of aging in place would be staying within a known neighborhood and being able to access the stores and services with which she is familiar.

Mr. Katz said he lived most of his working life in a single family residence in Issaquah. He said only after the death of his spouse did he seek a change and moved to a condominium on Lake Bellevue. He said aging in place for him would also mean being in a place where familiar stores and services are within reach. Of course, affordability will be key to any future living arrangements.

Ms. Seltzer said she still lives in a single family home that would easily accommodate having someone else live there since it has a full daylight basement. She said she has given serious consideration to renting out the space, which would make the home far more affordable for her.

Ms. Thompson referred to the Beacon Hill concept in which residents of a neighborhood agree to pay a monthly amount in exchange for certain services. She said the concept is very interesting and could assist seniors to age in place in the homes in which they have lived for a long time. Mr. Sullivan suggested the Network on Aging could look into how that approach could be implemented in Bellevue.

Mr. Sullivan said managing monthly housing costs is a prime factor for aging in place. Residents of condominiums have homeowner fees to consider. Home repairs and maintenance are also very important considerations, especially for seniors who may no longer be able to do the work themselves. The issue of whether or not a current home fits the physical needs of a senior must be taken into account. Availability of services is also important.

Ms. Ressler highlighted the factor of having family live nearby. She allowed that different cultures view that issue in different ways, but as Bellevue's demographics change there are more and more groups living in the city who value having family members living as close as possible.

Mr. Sullivan agreed that for many, family is the most important factor. He stressed that happiness is also important, something that occurs only when a number of factors interplay.

The concept of aging in place encompasses far more than just a person's style of residence. Mr. Sullivan allowed that the Network on Aging will likely be asked to deal with the issue and in doing so must keep in mind that housing is only one aspect of the issue. Real solutions will incorporate all of the factors.

Bellevue offers a home repair program that has been very successful in helping low-income residents, including many seniors, get home repair work done. Well maintained homes are an asset to any neighborhood. Often neighborhoods resist change, but investments in maintenance are required to preserve entire neighborhoods. There are many types of investments that can protect the integrity of neighborhoods while addressing the changes occurring in the community.

Mr. Sullivan shared with the Network pictures of accessory dwelling units that would be allowed in Bellevue under the current code that requires such units to be a part of the primary structure. Accessory dwelling units are not allowed to be created in homes less than three years old, and in all cases either the accessory dwelling unit or the primary structure must be

occupied by the property owner. Pictures of detached accessory dwelling units, which would not be allowed in Bellevue currently, were also shown to the Network. Bellevue is rethinking its current code to expand the focus for accessory dwelling units and new building designs in single family neighborhoods that could accommodate more than one small household.

One form of housing being constructed is adult family homes. While sometimes adult family homes are designed and built from the ground up, more often than not existing homes are retrofitted. Another form of housing is duplexes or triplexes in single family neighborhoods constructed by non-profits specifically for seniors. The example that exists on Main Street in Bellevue has 24 total units designed to emulate the surrounding single family neighborhood; a church made the land available at a very low cost and the units are rentals. The units allow seniors to remain in their neighborhood.

Mr. Katz pointed out that well-placed and well-designed community centers is one factor that makes neighborhoods senior friendly. Mr. Sullivan said it is equally important to have walkable neighborhoods and city governments that understand the needs of seniors and take them into account in their planning activities.

BREAK

BNOA MAINTENANCE

A. PR/Outreach

Ms. VonWald said the Home is Where the Heart Is Fair put on by Overlake went very well.

Ms. VonWald noted that Ms. Thompson is scheduled to present the PowerPoint presentation to the hearing loss group and possibly to Senior Net.

Ms. Ressler said the PTSA will be conducting its annual meeting on January 20, 2010, at Sammamish High School. She said they are offering service tables and the Network could have one. Interested parties will need to submit a request before November 20. Separately, the PTA has offered to promote the Network conducting a meeting at a school site; they have suggested conducting it the second week of February. She suggested that would be a good opportunity to share the Powerpoint presentation and the gatekeeper program.

B. Regional Partnerships

Ms. VonWald reminded the Network that Ms. Thompson and Mr. Katz have been serving on the joint committee with the Kirkland Senior Council in planning for the Legislative Meet and Greet in Kirkland on November 9 from 4:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m. Barbie Pigott, past chair of the Kirkland Senior Council, will make a presentation, and Ms. Rasnack will present the legislative agenda. Copies of the legislative agenda were provided to the Network members.

Motion to approve the legislative agenda to be presented to the legislators was made by Mr. Katz. Second was by Ms. Rasnick.

The items on the legislative agenda were: supporting the Senior Citizen Services Act, the primary funding source for senior information and assistance; adult day health; services that may or may not be cut by the governor's budget; supporting additional opportunities for senior housing; the proposed legislation by Attorney General Rob McKenna regarding vulnerable adults; and Project 2020, which expands on the senior information and assistance model.

The motion carried unanimously.

C. Legislative Issues

Covered in the preceding agenda item.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

A. Advocacy/Housing & Mobility

Ms. VonWald reported that Eve Stern from Snap for Seniors gave the subcommittee some excellent information about their housing database. The group thought the list could be more complete by having added to it independent housing. Ms. Stern noted that the affordable housing piece is already covered by ARCH and welcomed the idea of including independent housing options in the database, provided the Network does the research and forwards the information to her.

Ms. Rasnick said one point made by Ms. Stern was that subsidized housing is in such demand that there is little interest in having it advertised in any way.

Ms. Seltzer reported that the Eastside Easy Rider Coalition will host a meeting on November 19, the focus of which will be providers outlining their perceived gaps in the system and coordinating travel options. The panel discussion will be moderated by Francois Larrivee from Hopelink.

B. Education/Safety & Support

Ms. Thompson said the article on hearing loss was released on October 21. The subcommittee is considering drafting an article on safety during the holiday period.

The Network was informed that on November 17 the film *Tricks of the Trade: Outsmarting Investment Frauds* will be premiered. The film was put together by AARP and a volunteer regulatory agency of investors and brokers. The film will show at Northgate at 5:30 p.m. and will be followed by a half hour discussion. It is possible the film could be screened on BTV as well.

Ms. Thompson said on the morning of November 24 there will be a telephone conference with Attorney General Rob McKenna. Tickets are required for anyone wanting to participate, but the tickets are offered for free.

C. Nominating Committee 2010 Member Recommendations

Motion to approve the recommendation of the nominating committee to reappoint Eileen Rasnack, Berta Seltzer, Diana Thompson and Howard Katz to an additional two-year term expiring December 2011 was made by Ms. Gray. Second was by Mr. Dilley and the motion carried unanimously.

Motion to approve the recommendation of the nominating committee to appoint new members Peg English, Richard Englund, Cindy Sharek and Beverly Heyden to a two-year term expiring December 2011 was made by Ms. Gray. Second was by Ms. Ressler.

Ms. Gray said a total of six applications were received, though one was withdrawn prior to the interview process. The remaining five applicants were interviewed. The persons recommended by the nominating committee represent the best matches in knowledge and experience. Ms. English is a resident of Bellevue who is retired from a career in human resources and domestic violence advocacy. Mr. Englund, also a resident of Bellevue, is retired and is involved in the Vucrest Community Association senior services group. Ms. Sharek is a Bellevue resident as well and is currently employed by Elder and Adult Day Services in Bellevue. Ms. Heyden is a resident of Bellevue who is retired from the banking industry and is currently serving on the North Bellevue Community Center advisory board.

The motion carried unanimously.

Ms. VonWald announced that the chair and vice-chair positions for 2010 will be held by Lynne Robinson and Hannah Kimball respectively.

STAFF REPORT

Ms. VonWald reported that she will be working in the City Manager's office between January and April of 2010. She said she will not be at the North Bellevue Community Center during that time but will continue to staff the Network on Aging.

Ms. VonWald said explorations are under way to find a different room at City Hall for the Network to meet in starting in 2010. She the room will be bigger and will facilitate having the Network members sit at the table and guests sit away from the table.

NEW BUSINESS – None

PUBLIC COMMENTS/QUESTIONS

Mr. Lincoln Vander Veen from Congressman Riechert's office introduced himself. He said he would welcome having the Network discuss the healthcare reform issue and pass along comments to the Congressman. He allowed that one of the things missing from the debate has been the perspective of the senior community.

UPCOMING AGENDA ITEMS

ADJOURN

Ms. VonWald adjourned the meeting at 10:33 a.m.